

SUPPLEMENTAL AMENDMENT
Application No. 09/392,585
Attorney Docket Q55716

REMARKS

General remarks.

Applicant respectfully thanks the Examiner and his supervisor for participating in the interview conducted by Applicant's representative on July 24, 2002.

Claims 1-4 and 6-12 are all the claims pending in the application. Claim 6 has been amended so that it depends from independent claim 1 instead of canceled claim 5, and to provide correct handling of antecedent basis as to the term, "printing heads."

Claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-4 and 6-11.

Discussion of claim amendments.

Claim 1 has been amended in ways discussed during the interview, and it is respectfully submitted that the claim as presented patentably distinguishes over the prior art. In particular, the claim now explicitly requires that the plurality of franking machines include at least one that is in communication with the public communications network.

In addition, the claim as now presented more correctly portrays the relationship between the supervision terminal and the isolated franking machine. Before amendment, the claim indicated that the supervision terminal was independent of the isolated franking machine. This was not inaccurate, but the focus of the claim is that the isolated franking machine is independent of the supervision terminal.

That is to say, the isolated franking machine is not commanded by, controlled by, or under the influence of the supervision terminal. As mentioned in the specification, it is the user who inputs index information about the isolated franking machine at the supervision terminal (page 5, line 27 to page 6, line 1: "... and enters via the keyboard of the terminal the new current index."). The authorization to frank, which appears at the supervision terminal, is "introduced manually by the user" (page 6, lines 15-16). The isolated franking machine and supervision terminal thus have the relationship required by claim 1:

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at least one supervision terminal from which the isolated franking machine is independent ... [and the user] receives a code of authorization in order to validate the subsequent frankings of the isolated franking machine ...

This sort of relationship is illustrated, in the embodiment shown in Fig. 1 of the originally-filed specification, between MAA5 and supervision terminal 60.

Claim 1 has been broadened by eliminating the unnecessary limitations relating to the printing heads of the franking machines. The claim now more simply recites that the display at the supervision terminal includes "a list of the plurality of franking machines" and the last (validated) invoicing index for each machine.

Discussion of prior art rejections.

Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1, as now amended, patentably distinguishes over the prior art. In Horbal, the so-called isolated franking machine is not independent of the so-called supervision terminal. Moreover, Horbal does not teach or suggest a plurality of franking machines with at least one isolated from and at least one in communication with the communication network. Furthermore, Horbal lacks the requirement for displaying a list of the plurality of franking machines, and, for each one of the plurality of franking machines, a last invoicing index validated by the management server.

Because of this deficiency, Horbal cannot achieve the objective stated in Applicant's specification at page 1, lines 23-27:

... such a link to a server¹ does not enable the user to have an overall or even local picture of the management of his set and, in particular, it is not possible for him to

¹ "such a link to a server" refers to links like those of EP 0 208 231, mentioned in the preceding paragraph on page 1 of the specification, in which each franking machine communicates with a specialized data processing server, and in which the machine's indexes are automatically acquired, and the franking authorization is automatically received.

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know, at a given instant, the state of the indexes of the different machines without reading them at the level of each machine ...

Thus, the artisan of ordinary skill would not have (and could not have) been led by Horbal to achieve the subject matter of independent claim 1, as now amended, or any of its dependent claims.

Moss does not contain any teachings that relate to these deficiencies of Horbal. Even taken for what they would have meant as a whole to an artisan of ordinary skill, the combined teachings of Horbal and Moss could not have led the artisan of ordinary skill to the subject matter of claim 1 or any of its dependent claims.

Wilson and Eckert, likewise, do not contain any teaching or suggestion of a supervision terminal that meets the requirements of claim 1, and also which displays the above-mentioned information which provides the overall picture of a mixed set of franking machines.

Applicant therefore respectfully submits that the foregoing comments prove that claim 1, as now amended, patentably distinguishes over Horbal, over Wilson, over Eckert, over the combined teachings of Horbal and Moss, and even over the combined teachings of all prior art references taken together as a whole. Applicant therefore respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claim 1 as being anticipated by Horbal, the rejection of claims 2-4 and 6-11 as being unpatentable over Horbal in view of Moss, the rejection of claims 1-4 and 6-11 as being anticipated by Eckert, and the rejection of claims 1-4 and 6-11 as being anticipated by Wilson.

Claim 12.

Claim 12 has been amended to clarify the relationship between the supervision terminal and the franking machines. Claim 12 requires:

the plurality of franking machines all being independent of the supervision terminal ...

The claim has been broadened by eliminating the unnecessary requirements for menus. Claims 12 also requires that the supervision terminal provide:

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statistical data indicative of franking performed by said plurality of franking machines.

The display of this data of the plurality of franking machines helps provide the "overall picture" and thereby meet an objective of the invention.

All of the franking machines are independent of the supervision terminal. Thus, all of the franking machines are not commanded by, not controlled by, and not under the influence of the supervision terminal. "Electrical isolation" of a franking machine is not required in this claim.

Even so, the supervision terminal is configured to provide the above-identified statistical data, thereby giving the user the necessary overall picture of a set of franking machines. None of Horbal, Moss, Wilson, or Eckert teach or suggest such a feature. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that claim 12 is not unpatentable over Horbal in view of Moss (within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 103), and is not anticipated by Wilson or Eckert (within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 102).

Applicant therefore respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw these prior art rejections of independent claim 12.

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Conclusion and request for telephone interview.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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APPENDIX

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are amended as follows:

1. (Amended three times) A process for monitoring the consumptions of a plurality of franking machines through a public communication network, at least one of the franking machines being electrically isolated from the public communications network and at least one of the franking machines being in communication with the public communications network, the process comprising the steps of:

first establishing a link with a management server through the public communications network, in accordance with a protocol of communication, via at least one supervision terminal [that is independent of] from which the isolated franking machine is independent [, in accordance with a protocol of communication]; and

subsequently proceeding with an exchange of data between the supervision terminal and the management server during which a user (1) acquires at the supervision terminal a current invoicing index indicative of the isolated franking machine and (2) receives a code of authorization to frank in order to validate the subsequent frankings of the isolated franking machine, wherein said step of data exchange further comprises:

displaying, at the supervision terminal (1) a list of [printing heads associated with] the plurality of franking machines, and (2) for each [printing head] one of the plurality of franking machines, a last invoicing index validated by the management server.

6. (Amended two times) The process of claim [5] 1, wherein said step of data exchange further comprises [:] displaying, at the supervision terminal, one of a selectable plurality of tables

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and statistics in graph form relating to [the] a list of printing heads of the plurality of franking machines.

12. (Amended two times) A process for monitoring the consumptions of a plurality of franking machines through a public communication network, the process comprising the steps of:

first establishing a link with a management server through the public communications network, via a supervision terminal [that is independent of the plurality of franking machines], in accordance with a protocol of communication, the plurality of franking machines all being independent of the supervision terminal; and

subsequently proceeding with an exchange of data between the supervision terminal and the management server during which a user (1) inputs at the supervision terminal an identifier including at least one of a password and a personal identification number, and (2) receives from a display of the supervision terminal [one of (a) a selectable menu of new indexes and (b) a menu of the last indexes validated by the management server as] statistical data indicative of franking performed by said plurality of franking machines.